

State Water Resources Control Board

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR
DRAFT WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION
AND
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT SUPPLEMENT**

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY'S
SIX BIG CREEK HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT
NOS. 67, 120, 2085, 2086, 2174, AND 2175**

To: Interested Parties Mailing List

Notice is hereby given that the Draft California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Supplement and draft water quality certification (certification) for Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects are available for public review and comment.

Background:

Southern California Edison Company (SCE) filed applications for new major licenses (relicensing) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for six separate FERC-licensed hydroelectric projects, FERC Project Nos. 67, 120, 2085, 2086, 2174 and 2175 (together, the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects). As part of the relicensing process, SCE combined its certification applications for the six separate projects into one application and filed its most recent certification application for the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects, under section 401 of the Clean Water Act, with the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) on November 20, 2017. The current application is for certification for the following projects, to be covered under one certification:

- Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8, and Eastwood Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 67);
- Big Creek No. 3 Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 120);
- Mammoth Pool Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2085);
- Vermilion Valley Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2086);
- Portal Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2174); and
- Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2175).

Prior to issuance of a certification, the State Water Board must comply with CEQA. The State Water Board, as lead agency for CEQA compliance, intends to rely on FERC's Final Environmental Impact Statement¹ (EIS) and Environmental Assessments² (EAs), in combination with a CEQA Supplement

¹ On March 13, 2009, FERC issued the Final EIS for the following four Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects: Mammoth Pool Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2085); Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8, and Eastwood Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 67); Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2175); and Big Creek No. 3 Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 120).

² On April 27, 2006, FERC issued the Final EA for the Portal Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2174). On May 4, 2004, FERC issued the EA for the Vermilion Valley Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2086).

Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects
Notice of Draft Water Quality Certification and CEQA Supplement

the State Water Board has prepared, to satisfy CEQA requirements. This Notice is provided in satisfaction of the formal written notice requirements for public review. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15072.) CEQA Guidelines section 15225 provide that a lead agency may use a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document (here, FERC's EIS and EAs) to satisfy CEQA if the NEPA document is circulated for public review as broadly as required by CEQA. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15225.)

The State Water Board is accepting comments on the Draft CEQA Supplement, FERC's NEPA documents to the extent the comments address CEQA requirements, and the draft certification.

Project Description:

The Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects are located in Fresno and Madera Counties, in the upper San Joaquin River watershed on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects are comprised of an integrated system of hydroelectric projects with operations coordinated to maximize the value of hydropower produced from available water supply. Together the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects include seven major powerhouses and one power station, five reservoirs, numerous dams and small diversions, various water conveyance facilities, access roads, electrical transmission lines, and other appurtenant facilities. The combined authorized generation capacity of the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects is 850.6 megawatts.

For purposes of the CEQA analysis, the Project being considered by the State Water Board is issuance of water quality certification for the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects and includes SCE's proposed project as described in its applications to FERC, conditions proposed by United States Forest Service pursuant to section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act, FERC's NEPA staff alternatives, terms of the Big Creek ALP Settlement Agreement³, and conditions of the certification necessary to protect water quality. The State Water Board has determined that all potential impacts associated with continued operation of the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects under new FERC license(s), will be less than significant under CEQA.

How to Comment:

The comment period is from the date of this Notice until October 12, 2018. Comments on the Draft CEQA Supplement and draft certification must be received by 12:00 pm (noon) on October 12, 2018. Comments must specifically identify the document the comment(s) applies to (i.e., Draft CEQA Supplement or draft certification) and can be submitted electronically or by mail to:

Ms. Michelle Siebal
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality Certification Program
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000
or
Email: WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov

The Draft CEQA Supplement and draft certification are available on the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects' webpage:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/big_creek/

In addition, copies of the NEPA documents are available on the State Water Board's project-specific webpages, which are available from the webpage above.

³ SCE filed the *Big Creek Alternative Licensing Process (ALP) Hydroelectric Projects Settlement Agreement* with FERC on February 21, 2007.

Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects
Notice of Draft Water Quality Certification and CEQA Supplement

If you cannot access the documents online, you can review hard copies of the NEPA documents, Draft CEQA Supplement, and draft certification at the locations below. These documents will be available at the following locations no later than August 20, 2018.

State Water Resources Control Board 1001 I Street, 2 nd Floor, Room 2-114 Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 341-5300	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board - Fresno 1685 East Street Fresno, CA 93706 (559) 445-5116	Fresno County Library 33049 Auberry Road Auberry, CA 93602 (559) 855-8523
<i>KEEP INFORMED OF PROJECT MILESTONES</i> To receive emails related to the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects and other projects pursuing certifications managed by the Division of Water Rights, interested persons should enroll in the "Water Rights Water Quality Certification" e-mail notification service. Click the "Subscribe" button at the bottom of the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program webpage at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/ By enrolling in this email list, you will receive notices for current projects in the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program, including the Six Big Creek Hydroelectric Projects. You will need a valid email address to use this service. You can enroll or withdraw from the email subscription service at any time. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email subscription list, you may contact Ms. Michelle Siebal at (916) 322-8465 and request to receive notices by mail.		

If you have questions regarding this Notice, please contact Ms. Michelle Siebal by phone at (916) 322-8465 or by email at WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Ann Marie Ore, Program Manager
Water Quality Certification & Public Trust Section
Division of Water Rights

AUG 13 2018

Date